

USAR_J-3_Kimiko_Kobayashi

03:16:11:10 Thank you for coming today.

03:16:25:02 Please tell us your name and your date of birth.

03:16:30:14 My name is Kimiko Kobayashi. I was born in July 7th, Showa 2nd.

03:16:54:04 How did you hear about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

03:17:10:21 About the war?

03:17:12:08 About Pearl Harbor...

03:17:13:04 About Pearl Harbor?

03:17:14:06 Yes

03:17:14:22 It was December 8th. I heard it on the radio news flash when I woke up in the morning. I was scared to hear that Japan had enter a war with America.

03:17:42:10 Where were you at that time?

03:17:45:06 I was born in Asakawa village.

03:17:51:21 You were in Asakawa village when you heard the news about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

03:17:54:15 Yes

03:17:56:13 What were you doing when you hear about the news?

03:18:02:10 I think I was in 6th grade, or maybe 7th grade.

03:18:33:10 Were you worried that Japan is at war with America?

03:18:39:10 Yes, yes, many of the neighbor went to war as soldier and I heard that one of the young neighbor had died at war.

03:18:57:10 How did you feel right after the attack on Pearl Harbor?

03:19:07:02 I was worried that Japan is at war against such a big country like US.

03:19:19:11 Were you able to share your thoughts with other people? Wasn't it taboo?

03:19:29:06 Yes, it was taboo thing to share those opinion to others. There was a person who said it out loud and that person was arrested by the police.

03:19:55:14 You would feel anxious to see person got arrested...

03:20:00:01 The person who got arrested was a teacher from

elementary school. He was teaching upper grade than my grade. He was a teacher was a communist and was against the war. And he got arrested. I felt anxious about it.

03:20:38:18 Did you have any friends or relatives in military who participated directly in the Pearl Harbor attack?

03:21:49:06 Not in my family, but 7 relatives had died in the war at Saipan and New Guinea. They were all wonderful guys.

03:21:30:04 Please tell us about your experience of helping make the balloon bomb.

03:21:52:04 The chief of the Asakawa village was in the military, and he asked us to help him make the balloon bomb. He told us that if we don't help him, Japan would lose the war. He also told us that if we don't help him, US soldiers would kill us when they land in Japan. We've got scared and 8 of us from Asakawa got involved in it.

03:22:32:18 What kind of stuff did you do?

03:22:37:13 That happened after I graduated "Jyo-gakkou"(girls' school). After the graduation, if we were not going to college, each of us were assigned to go to military factory or railway administration, or farm. I was the one who went to a farm.

03:23:19:10 Did you go to Kabukiza, Tokyo?

03:23:22:18 On November, we finished farmwork, so we didn't have anything else to do. That was when we were sent to Tokyo to help make balloon bomb. We arrived at international theater in Asakusa, but no one was there but the items from famous actresses such as Yaeko Mizutani, Kinuyo Tanaka, and Setsuko Hara. We noticed that everyone was kicked out.

03:24:26:02 We were told that it was a top secret so we could not share to other people. 8 of us were divided into 2 groups.

03:24:38:12 My group was in charge of checking Japanese paper whether it had a hole or not. The size of the paper was about the size of a tatami mat. After we check the papers, we brought them to appropriate place. There were three instructors and they taught us what to do. There was always military police watching us and telling us not to talk to each other.

03:25:13:20 We woke up on 5:00AM everyday. There were nothing to eat, only kaoliang. It didn't go through our mouth. We ate kaoliang in the morning and chinese noodle for lunch. It had bad smell so we couldn't eat them.

03:25:37:22 There weren't any warm stuff so my hands were chapped and had chilblain. We were working with that kind of condition. We were in charge of checking the stencils, but other group was doing different thing. They go inside this circle and check to see if it has

any holes, like this. We could never ask other group what they were doing.

03:26:08:21 They took them out during the night, so we had no idea what kind of stuff we were working on.

03:26:22:08 How long were you working on them? From what year?

03:26:26:03 It was from November Showa 19th to March Showa 20th, before the date of the bombing of Tokyo.

03:26:40:02 How many people were there at the theater?

03:26:45:19 There were group of people from Saku, and Yoyono. Also there were 5 or 6 people from Asakusa commercial girls' school. From upper division, there were people from Tokyo Jissen girls' school. There were lots of people but we were not allowed to get along with each other.

03:27:18:02 That was because they were afraid for us to share information with each other. I didn't really talk to them so I only new where they were from.

03:27:26:21 We were spending night at Yagumo Hotel, and there was a teacher, Mr. Nakamura, from Hokkaido. He had done severe teaching to us.

03:27:47:18 I couldn't forget what he said to us. When we were working unproductively, he yelled at us "if you are keep working like that, it is not good for Japan."

03:28:03:15 How long does it take to complete one thing?

03:28:17:06 We have no idea. They took them out during night. I heard this later that they flew them from Kujyu-kurihama on westerly wind. They flew them in March. We've made 2000 bombs but only 20 of them reached to opponent. And only 1 out of 20 bombs worked. That's what I heard later on.

03:28:57:06 Is there anything else we should know from your experience of making the balloon bombs?

03:29:00:05 This is what I heard later as well. Government of Japan or the army of Japan was thinking about bombing America with balloon bomb. I don't know if this is true or not, but I heard that they made an atomic bomb by getting idea from the balloon bomb.

03:29:37:12 Can you tell us about your experience at Tokyo air-raid, such as tree saved your life, and so forth.

03:29:53:12 It was the day I went back home from the work. I couldn't even go home in the new years day. We had to complete the plan as soon as possible so we had to work on new years day.

03:30:10:16 We were thinking about going back to farm in March. At night, when we were planning to take a bath and go to sleep, we

heard bombing sound and air plane sound right after a loud air-raid alert. We noticed that it was different from previous bombing. When we went outside, incendiary bombs were falling down like rain.

03:30:45:21 The incendiary bombs started fire when they reached ground. We survived because we didn't go inside an air-raid shelter. People in the shelter were screaming for help because the entrance of the shelter caught on fire. We couldn't help them. We once got inside the shelter but we didn't like it there so we went outside and stayed at empty field.

03:31:20:18 We survived there but balls of fire were flying toward us like typhoon. Japanese cushions and other things were flying toward us. The wood sticks were flying with fire on them. When the telephone pole got on fire, it started burning from center. I still can imagine how the telephone pole was swaying.

03:31:57:12 Which year's new year was it?

03:32:00:03 It was night of March 9th, Showa 20th.

03:32:07:14 So it wasn't on new years? It happened on March?

03:32:13:02 Yes.

03:32:13:11 So it wasn't on new years day?

03:32:15:00 No it wasn't on new years day. I meant, I worked hard on new years day and kept making them and March came.

03:32:23:14 Can you tell me the location?

03:32:25:00 We were staying at Asakusa Hotel and it was near the international theater. There was Sensoji Temple in front of it. There was a empty field in between Sensoji Temple and international theater. We were at the empty field.

03:32:57:22 But the fire were flying at us. We damped our air defense hood and wore them tightly, but still these places were caught on fire. We beat the fire to get it off so my hands got tetanus from bacteria.

03:33:20:15 We were running away with nothing but the clothes everyone wore. We didn't have money either. We didn't drink, eat, and sleep for 3 days and 3 nights.

03:33:34:21 Can you tell us about the tree saved your life?

03:33:36:17 The last place we took refuge from the attack was under a tree. We were crying not to die and cheered each other while hugging the tree. We got survived because of that.

03:34:01:06 There is one more thing. When we were in front of the international theater, we met a soldier who was guarding the Imperial Palace. He was carrying his mother in two-wheeled cart and asked us to run away with her with cart because she couldn't walk. We told

him that we would protect her, but we were desperate to keep ourselves away from fire, so we forgot about her. When we saw her in the morning, she had burned black and dead inside the cart. We said sorry and apologized, but couldn't help anything. If the soldier who went to the Imperial Palace was still alive, I would apologize to him that we couldn't protect her. I always think about it.

03:35:13:01 There was one more story about son of the Asakusa Hotel. He told his mother, "I would depart to the front so I don't need my shoes anymore. I would circle around the Tokyo three times and drop the shoes from a plane, so please pick up the shoes and keep them as a memory." I still can picture that scene. I wonder how hard it was to hear her son saying that.

03:35:59:12 Everyone was saying that Japan was kingdom of god so Sensoji Temple wouldn't get burnt. But the Sensoji Temple got burned red and collapsed in the morning. All of the people who escaped inside the Sensoji Temple had died. Many people were brainwashed that they believed Japan was kingdom of god. Such a weird education.

03:36:38:14 We could no longer be in Asakusa so we decided to go to Kamata where the film studio was. We went along the Sumida River for several kilometers to reach Kamata. While we were walking I saw many dead people, if not dead, they were moaning. I still can picture the image. A war should not be repeated. Everyone suffered and died. A hundred thousand people from Tokyo air-raid. When I think about it, I would say a war should never be repeated.

03:37:58:19 How did you feel about atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

03:38:05:10 I was very angry. Why so many of blameless people had to die.

03:38:22:18 Did you have any fear?

03:38:25:18 Yes, I was afraid that they would do same thing on our region. It happened on Nagano as well, so I thought Japan would be destroyed.

03:38:48:19 How did you feel about Japanese surrender?

03:38:52:17 It was disappointing that Japan had lost but more importantly, I felt relieved that the war had ended and I survived.

03:39:27:14 When Japan entered the war, did the clothes changed?

03:39:34:18 I still have the picture. When I entered the girls' school, we had a sailor blouse uniform. However, one year later, we ended up wearing Japan made shawl collar shirts because the sailor blouse uniform was from opponent country. Army forced us to change school uniform completely.

03:40:02:20 Did you have blackout or any military training?

03:40:07:23 Yes we did. We trained bamboo spear and Naginata (pole weapon). I wonder why they thought that we could win with those weapons. We had a midwinter training. Soldiers from Himeji came and they were training as well. Places around Zenko-ji Temple became shelter for soldiers.

03:41:01:07 How hard was it to get necessary items, such as food, close to the end of the war compared to beginning of the war? Did availability changed?

03:41:14:05 Yes, it changed. We had to give all rice to government. One of neighbor died because of that. We were enforced to give specified amount of rice.

03:41:41:03 Did it happened right after the attack on Pearl Harbor?

03:41:47:22 No

03:41:48:10 When did you start having problem with not having enough food?

03:41:51:09 It wasn't that bad when I entered the girls' school. Because we were helping farm, we could barely got food we need. Other people came to farm to get or buy something to eat. We shared little because we didn't have plenty of them, but we helped each other to survive.

03:42:30:21 So the situation were getting worse little by little?

03:42:32:16 That's right. We ate rice with potato, sweet potato, or pumpkin. We could hardly eat plain white rice.

03:42:47:10 Were you able to eat plain white rice right after the war started?

03:42:52:01 I don't remember, but the situation in Tokyo was awful.

03:43:35:20 How did you and your family were affected by the economic pressures in Japan? Especially from war with China and US embargo on oil and scrap metal.

03:44:03:14 Many of my relatives went to the Second Sino-Japanese War. Two of my uncle went to the war. Children were left behind, so I went to help prepare meal for them.

03:44:32:14 How old were you when it happened?

03:44:35:22 When I was 16 years old.

03:44:48:02 So many of your relatives went to the Second Sino-Japanese War and you had to go out for help. Can you talk about that

little more in detail?

03:45:00:04 My relatives were farmer, so I often go help reap a rice field. I also went to help household who went to military. That was called a labor service. I didn't have time study because of the labor service and cultivation.

03:45:39:03 Did you have a chance to interact with military?

03:45:44:06 Yes. My father didn't go to military, instead he was a board member of the region. He prepared room for soldiers to stay. Some soldiers asked him to let them do military drill in a field. Soldiers from Himeji and Takada came. My father was in charge of reception.

03:46:39:06 How did you show respect for Emperor?

03:46:43:06 Each school had a shrine that worship Emperor in the entrance, so everyone prayed each time they pass through. And on national holiday, the principal would read out phrases by Emperor. The beginning part is like this "Chin-omouni waga kousou kousou..." (I think our ancestors...). The principal read it about 6 times a year to teach us the importance of our country.

03:47:42:09 Did you know the deteriorating relationship between Japan and America prior to the war?

03:47:48:13 I was too young to know those stuff so I don't remember. I remember things after the war.

03:48:36:05 Did you know anything about Japan's expansion in Asia?

03:48:43:21 I wonder if they were trying to expand the land because of the increase of the population in Japan. I was thinking like that back then.

03:49:02:03 "Manmou-kaitaku"(Japanese incursions into northeast China)

03:49:05:17 I have 2 or 3 friends who migrated to North Korea. They got killed when they escaped in a mountain. They were in same grade as I.

03:49:32:07 What year was it?

03:49:33:19 We graduated in Showa 16th, and they went there right after the graduation. They applied to go there.

03:50:09:17 Did you have any friends or relatives who were living in Hawaii or US prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

03:50:20:15 My son was in San Francisco for 2 years. And my grandchild is in US now.

03:50:38:16 When did your son went to San Francisco?

03:50:43:14 My sons went to San Francisco in 50.

03:50:49:23 Year of 1950?

03:50:50:20 No, Showa 50th. Wait, my grandchild was born in Showa 52nd and they went to US when he was 2, so it must be Showa 54th or 55th. They lived there for 2 years. And my grandchild went back to US last year.

03:51:15:15 Did you have any friends or relatives in America prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

03:51:19:18 My son still have friends in America, so he was arranging homestay to those people. He is busy with his work now so he is not doing that as often. I don't remember their names, but I remember they were accepting and cheerful. I realized that people from all of the world can get along together. My grandchild is getting along well with them too.

03:52:11:19 So you didn't have any relatives in America around Showa 15th?

03:52:16:10 It happened after my son came back from America.

03:52:33:14 How did you feel about America and American people after the Pearl Harbor attack?

03:52:41:05 I didn't know about them back then. I noticed how they are cheerful and accepting after I started to meet them. I was invited to visit America, so I did. I went there for the centennial of West Honganji religion. They all welcomed me and had interchange party as well. I think Japanese people are unaccepting, but American people are very accepting. There are people who came to Japan for 2nd and 3rd time. Those people are very friendly and call me bacchan(grandmother). I am very happy about it.

03:53:34:10 So the Japan attacked on Pearl Harbor on Showa 16th. How did you feel about America after the attack during the war?

03:53:45:21 The Tokyo air-raid was very sad incident, but if this was opposite, the Japan would be different from what it is right now. I don't remember well about years before Showa 16th.

03:54:06:05 Did you dislike America during the war?

03:54:09:16 I didn't know about them well that time.

03:54:11:16 You didn't think about the opponent, what kind of people were they?

03:54:14:05 No.

03:54:15:15 It was just a opponent, and you didn't think about what

kind of people American people were?

03:54:18:23 No, I didn't know anything about them.

03:54:21:10 Did you know the opponent was America?

03:54:25:23 Yes, I knew that.

03:54:27:14 So you didn't think about them?

03:54:28:20 No

03:54:50:10 Is there anything you would like to share with us from your experience of the war?

03:55:14:16 I would like to share about what was it like a day after the Tokyo air-raid.

03:55:23:06 On next day of the Tokyo air-raid, I saw awful scene at Sensoji Temple. Parents were looking for their children hysterically. And children were looking for their parents. There were dead bodies everywhere. It was dreadful to see innocent children suffering. I can never forget that scene. That should not be repeated again. I truly hope that the world would stay peaceful. It is the toughest thing for mother to send her son to a war.

03:56:16:14 I have a passage of mother who had her son died in a war at Attu Island. "Hitosarite sazotumetakarou ikotsuwo kotatude atatamete hahanakitamou." It means she didn't cry in front of people, but when she's alone, she cried in kotatsu holding her son's ash tightly. I had a chance to talk to them, and I keenly felt sadness from their experience. Please keep the world peaceful. Please. A war should never happen again.